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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, Sept. 29, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "Home Curing of Meats." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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We've been talking so much about preserving food by canning lately, that perhaps we've neglected some of the other ways of putting up our surplus food for winter. With cold weather just around the corner, many farms will have supplies of home butchered pork, beef and lamb on hand. So many of these families want the latest advice on preserving meat. If you want directions for home canning or home curing of meat, write your state college now and have the directions ready when you need them. Or write directly to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C.

Mr. K.F. Warner, meat specialist of the Department of Agriculture, has been in charge of recent experiments on curing meat. I think you will be interested in this report of his on the subject: He says:

"Our experiments have led us to conclude that the proper temperature is the first essential to successful curing of meat, especially pork. We have found that it always pays to chill the meat from freshly dressed hogs as promptly and thoroughly as would fresh milk. If pork is not chilled promptly, it may spoil. We have had the best results from holding chilled meat at a temperature around 38 degrees Fahrenheit during the curing period. Many farmers in the South learned this principle years ago and they now cure their meat in cold storage. Natural air temperatures are frequently not cold enough for chilling freshly killed carcasses especially in the South, where warm weather at butchering time, or soon after, often results in the spoilage of meat.

Many southern farmers provide desirable "weather" for chilling their meat by renting space in refrigeration plants. Some plants offer this service on a share basis, but in many localities cold-storage space may be rented at a reasonable figure. Other farmers use homemade ice boxes or ice-chilled brine in which portions of carcasses are immersed. The temperature at which pork is held during the curing process is also important and for best results should be kept near 38° F. as it requires some time for the salt to penetrate to the inner parts of the larger cuts.

The Bureau of Agricultural Engineering will supply free plans for making an ice box for chilling meat on the farm. A good many northern farmers are curing their meat in cellars, caves or other protected places to keep it from freezing, yet hold it below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.



"The second important point about curing pork is to use the proper amount of salt. Many people fear that hams won't keep unless they drench them with salt. But if the temperature is right, a remarkably small quantity of salt will preserve the meat--an amount small enough so that the ham will be mild in flavor and not too hard in texture. County farm or home agents of the extension service can give directions for making a mild and delightful ham or strip of breakfast bacon.

"Speaking of breakfast bacon, you can cure that delicious Canadian style bacon at home as easily as you can any other type of bacon. Canadian style bacon is simply the loin or 'pork-chop' muscle given a mild cure. By the way, don't try to keep these mild cured pork loins, breakfast bacons, and spare ribs through the summer. They dry out then and may become strong. Everybody enjoys them most with the odor of the fresh smoke on them. All these cuts need is a day or two of cool smoke. Hams and shoulders will stand longer smoking. This tends to drive off surplus moisture so that they will keep better during summer storage."

And here is a suggestion about lard that is to be stored until hot weather. Mr. Warner says he knows of no method to improve the odor or flavor of lard, once it has become rancid. Nothing to do with that lard but make it into soap. The point is to keep it sweet. In the first place, render lard thoroughly so practically all the moisture is driven off. Strain it carefully to remove the cracklings. Then store the lard in containers sealed so that light and air cannot reach it. A crock or glass container is ideal for storing lard. Fill the container almost to the top. Seal it as air-tight as possible. And store it in a dark, moderately cool place.

Many western families will be interested in the new methods of curing lamb. Mr. Warner says that the experiments show that lamb is not hard to chill and cure. He has had success in storing cured legs of lamb for several months after smoking. They taste something like dried beef. A slice of that cooked cured lamb is excellent for sandwiches.

The specialists say they have still something to learn about curing lamb, but all the state extension offices now have directions that you can safely use at home.

Well, then, the two main points to remember about curing pork and other meat are: First, chill the meat immediately after slaughter, and, second, cure with the proper amount of salt. Don't use too much.

Time for our menu--an inexpensive fall dinner menu: Fresh sausage or smoked ham, sliced and fried; Flaky rice or hominy; Baked peach halves, either fresh or canned, to serve with the meat; Battered kale; for dessert, One-egg cake served with lemon sauce.

Monday: "Canning Meat at Home."

